

NEBELUN'S PANDECT OF POSSIBILITIES



VARIANT RULES OPTIONS



A cohesive hoard of new and variant rules options
for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® fifth edition

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The rules here have been extensively playtested in various iterations, but they are wide in scope and have transformative mechanics, so no amount of small group testing will find all the potential gaps. Please let me know of any issues or suggestions at Rules.Mechanic@gmail.com.

Version 5.0, June 2021. Latest version available Pay What You Want at [DMs Guild](#). Please consider a short review or comment and if you could spread the word, that'd be great. You may also want to check out the related [Tome of Variance](#) project on [GM Binder](#) and [Reddit](#).

INTRODUCTION



elcome to Nebelun's Pandect of Possibilities, a handbook of variant rules options for the fifth edition of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®. Within this tinkerer's tome, core D&D® game mechanics are tuned and tweaked, reconfigured and re-imagined, but with an eye to keeping the distinctive feel (and compatibility) of fifth

edition, which has done so much so right in re-energising the game that so many of us love.

ADDING OPTIONAL DEPTH

The core aim is a cohesive but modular set of optional rules that add useful depth for both roleplayer and rollplayer, without disrupting compatibility or accessibility. Fairness is a central tenet but since they do tend to have a (pseudo) realism approach, some options will suit a grittier campaign setting.

Some complexity is a given with increased depth. Stripped-down rulesets have their own merits and there are some great examples. However this not a stripped-down ruleset. This is unapologetically a buffed ruleset. Cohesive but in a modular plug-and-play format so you can find the right balance for you. You should feel free to use as many, or as few, of these options as suits your group: a pick-and-mix of variant rules for the discerning homebrewer, dice goblin, or curious experimentalist. Ingredients for a craft homebrew to have the right depth and bite to suit your taste.

This Pandect of Possibilities is what might happen if a gnomish engineer with a penchant for modding got their hands on the fundamental laws of the D&D multiverse ...and then realized those rules can be taken apart, if you are careful how you put them back together again (although perhaps not quite in the same order, or using all the same pieces).

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This handbook is organized into chapters that align with sections of the *Player's Handbook* or *Dungeon Master's Guide*. If the rules in that chapter catch your interest, give them a spin in a playtest or even a regular session - either as a block, or by picking individual options. Even the more transformative options are designed to be friendly with game balance and involve minimal or no conversion. If they don't catch your interest, or fail to shine in the playtest, you can leave them and still try some of the other options. Although everything in this ruleset is designed to play well together, each option also stands alone and you can simply take the bits that suit your group's taste and style.

The chapters are organized into three parts. The first part contains core options and mechanics. The second part contains additional options for specific circumstances, equipment, or feats. The third part is an appendix for a couple of more experimental options.

STUDY NOTES ON THE PANDECT

It is the nature of all sentient beings to question their world and to seek change: great or small. Each us comes to our own world view from our own unique perspective and there are as many perfect visions of the world as there are beings to envisage them. Our kindred clerics of the learned Domain of Knowledge value the study and understanding of these world views and the natural philosophies underlying the manifold laws of the known multiverse. And many believe that there are no absolutes: that the world - mundane, divine, and every variant in between - simply reflects a myriad of possibilities from a limitless sea of ever-changing sentient beliefs.

A mythical tome laying out the infinite possibilities of knowledge is said to have been written by the legendary Cullen Kordamant, once Grand Patriarch of the Church of Oghma. Some say his writing earned him an eternal home in the great library of Oghma. Others say his work will never be done, that the laws are infinite, and the philosophies ever-expanding. Whichever story is correct, or indeed if none or all are correct, Kordamant's Treatise of Variant Realities is out of reach of our hands, minds, and souls.

A select branch of our kindred have dedicated themselves to uncovering these variant laws, learning how they might apply in our own world to bring new understanding and perhaps innovation to the great philosophies, the arcane arts, and even the physical world. Their discoveries grace the shelves of the great libraries and universities, their schools teach proven theory and best practice to world. Our Order takes a different path, one often derided by those lofty scholars of fact and theory. We live in the field and the workshop. We are the tinkerers, the experimentalists, the mechanics, and the engineers. Ours is to test and try, to fail and fail and then finally succeed, to live at the very vanguard of change, following the bold example of Nebelun, our Lady Tinkerer.

Like Kordamant's apocryphal Treatise, we record our discoveries in our own hallowed repository of knowledge, dedicated to our Mistress, the Fearless Inventor. It may take a hundred tries to uncover a new variant and a hundred more to refine it into a Law. Even then, the hard-earned fruits of our labours may not be done evolving, as they are yet tempered in the furnace of daily use: a survival of the fittest for ideas and practice, each striving to maintain a place in Nebelun's Pandect of Possibilities.

And now, as I complete my own chapter, I hand The Pandect on to you, my Dear Reader. May you forever be a seeker of change, discovery, and progress.

Insinoori Tonttu, humble Seeker of the Truths

PART 1

Core Options



DEGREE OF SUCCESS



egree of success (or failure) is a common strand to some of the main variant options in this handbook. Degree of success is a very simple way to add depth by expanding “pass or fail” into a spectrum of possibilities, while also linking skill to the likelihood of achieving the best results. It rewards players for doing what

they can to achieving the very best roll, while giving them reason to think twice about risking a very bad outcome.

This optional rule expands on the "Degrees of Failure" option (*Dungeon Master's Guide*), to provide a standard system for both success and failure across different types of rolls, while preserving the familiar fifth edition mechanic of Difficulty Class (DC) being in tiers of +/- 5. It's an intuitive system: rolling much higher than the target results in a much better outcome, rolling much lower results in a much worse outcome. And using steps of +/- 5 keeps the system fast and undemanding.

Roll	Margin	Outcome
Fail by 10 or more	10-	Critical Failure
Fail by 5 (5-9)	5-	Heavy Failure
Fail by 1 (1-4)	1-	Failure
Exact roll	0	Marginal
Succeed by 1 (1-4)	1+	Success
Succeed by 5 (5-9)	5+	Strong Success
Succeed by 10 or more	10+	Critical Success

For example, the table below shows the rolls that would lead to each outcome when making a DC 10 or a DC 15 roll. For the DC 10 roll, after adjusting for any modifiers, a 10 is marginal, above that's a success, from 15 it's a strong success, and from 20 it's a critical success. Similarly, below 10 is a failure, from 5 it's a heavy failure, and from 0 it's a critical failure.

Getting a critical success or critical failure when using degree of success is the equivalent of rolling a natural 20 or a 1 with the standard system. Feel free to combine the two if you want to keep the effect of a natural 20 or 1: simply count a roll of 20 as always being a critical success and a 1 as always being a critical failure.

Adjusted Roll	DC 10	Adjusted Roll	DC 15
0 or less	Critical Failure	5 or less	Critical Failure
1-5	Heavy Failure	6-10	Heavy Failure
4-9	Failure	11-14	Failure
10	Marginal	15	Marginal
11-14	Success	16-19	Success
15-19	Strong Success	20-24	Strong Success
20 or more	Critical Success	25 or more	Critical Success



STUDY NOTES

Our colleagues' teachings, and powers, are proof that the gods hold sway over our world. Perhaps moved by some greater unseen hand. Perhaps not. But we know they do not always get their way. There is self-determination and there is chance. Which of these is stronger, we do not know. But, between them, things can go well or they can go badly. They can also go very well or very very badly.

Insinoori Tonttu

VARIANT: ROLLING SUCCESS

If you would prefer not to do any additional counting for degree of success, you can use a second roll instead. Simply roll again after a success: a second success is a strong success; and if the second roll is also higher than the first, then it's a critical success. Likewise roll again after a fail: a second fail is a heavy failure; and if the second roll is also lower, then it's a critical failure. An exact roll is marginal (no second roll needed). This has similar odds of each outcome.

If rolling with advantage or disadvantage, or with any reroll effect, that effect only applies to the main roll. You then make a single rolling success roll for degree of success (unless already a marginal success). If the main roll was with advantage, then use the most helpful main dice roll when comparing for critical success or failure. If the main roll was with disadvantage, then use the least helpful main dice roll.

Main Roll	Second Roll	Outcome
Fail	Lower	Critical Failure
Fail	Fail	Heavy Failure
Fail	Succeed	Failure
Exact roll	-	Marginal
Succeed	Fail	Success
Succeed	Succeed	Strong Success
Succeed	Higher	Critical Success

STACKING ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE

In the core rules, advantage and disadvantage don't stack. So advantage from multiple sources is no greater than a single source of advantage. Similarly, if there are multiple sources imposing advantage and disadvantage, then neither apply, even if there are more sources of one than the other.

To stack, you can simply allow multiple sources of advantage and disadvantage to cancel one-for-one. If there are more sources of advantage than disadvantage, then advantage applies, and visa versa. As an additional option, if you are left with multiple advantage (or disadvantage), you may choose to allow additional dice for each.

ABILITY CHECKS

Many adventure modules include a range of outcomes for key ability checks by providing a spectrum of DCs for each check, across the common tiers of DC 10 (easy), 15 (medium), 20 (hard), etc ("Ability Checks", *Player's Handbook*).

The degree of success rules presented here extend that depth to any ability check by giving a spectrum of outcomes according to the degree of success (or failure) against a single DC.

Perhaps you are attempting a Charisma (Persuasion) check to ask for a queen's help. A critical failure might mean that she throws you in the dungeon for your impudence; a heavy failure that she sends you away; simple failure has no additional consequence so you can try again with the Spymaster; marginal could get her support but with a bribe; simple success results in her support as intended; strong success gets some extra aid from the Spymaster who was listening in; and critical success could inspire the Queen to put on her armor and lead the way!

The descriptions in the table below aim to be fluid enough to adapt to any ability check and to fit within your story, while giving a consistent framework to guide the outcome.

Marginal can often be the most interesting result and the outcome here is very much like the "Success at a Cost" option (*Dungeon Master's Guide*). The ability check was successful ...but only just, so there is only a partial success or some negative consequence.

Result	Description
Critical Failure (10-)	Now in a worse situation than started (if using a tool, damaged; if social interaction, opposite effect; etc)
Heavy Failure (5-)	A small negative consequence
Failure (1-)	No additional consequences
Marginal (0)	Success at a Cost (succeeds but only partially or with a small negative consequence)
Success (1+)	Core aim achieved, no additional gain
Strong Success (5+)	Enhanced effect, or a small additional gain
Critical Success (10+)	Maximum effect, or an additional gain as big as the original aim

STUDY NOTES

To some degree we make our own luck and build it on our talent. A lifetime of practice allows the folk singer to not just sing the classic ballads but to bring them to life and light a fire in the imagination of the spellbound listeners. An afternoon watching from the sidelines and drinking dwarven spirits is no substitute and can lead to some very unpleasant consequences. First-hand empirical proof of this appears to be a time-honoured tradition for our new recruits each Midsummerfest.

Insinoori Tonttu





SEQUENTIAL CHECKS

Sequential checks are a simple and effective option to determine a multi-stage or multi-skill outcome. The rogue who creeps through the rafters (Sneak) before leaping down (Acrobatics) to surprise their mark. The wizard poring through the lich's library to find the counter for the curse that plagues the land (Arcana and Investigation). However, each cumulative check adds difficulty in a similar way to rolling with disadvantage, so consider dropping a difficulty level (5 DC) for each additional ability check to maintain a similar chance of overall success.

If you are using the "Degree of Success" option, consider only using degree of success for the final ability check, unless each check is a distinct stage with a distinct outcome. However, if you want a cumulative degree of success, a marginal (exact roll) could confer disadvantage on the next roll (so that you may even wish to abandon and restart the attempt), a strong success (5+) could allow a reroll on the next roll, and a critical success (10+) could confer advantage on the next roll (see table below).

Result	Description
Critical Failure (10-)	Now in a worse situation than started, due to this stage
Heavy Failure (5-)	A small negative consequence, due to this stage failing
Failure (1-)	Fails without additional consequences
Marginal (0)	Disadvantage on next stage's roll
Success (1+)	Next stage as normal
Strong Success (5+)	You may reroll the next check, but must keep the reroll
Critical Success (10+)	Advantage on next stage's roll

ABILITY CHECKS IN COMBAT

Using abilities during combat can really add another dimension to the action, while also bringing in skills that otherwise get side-lined once initiative is rolled and combat commences. The ranger identifying (Nature) the beast that has attacked the party; the artificer determining (Investigation) the construct's weaknesses; the mage disguising the somatic (Sleight of Hand) or verbal (Deception) component of a spell; the rogue distracting (Performance) an ally's opponent; the barbarian scaring (Intimidate) them; or the bard encouraging (Persuasion) onlookers to come to your aid.

To encourage this, you may allow "Improvising an Action" (*Player's Handbook*) to use a bonus action instead of a main action if the check is then rolled with disadvantage. If the ability check requires an interaction with an object, it naturally also requires the time associated with that interaction, although you can interact with one object or feature of the environment for free on your turn ("Other Activities on Your Turn", *Player's Handbook*).

STUDY NOTES

Three steps to success is three ways to fail. The trick is to focus your attention on one thing at a time... if the gods permit you. Because once your attention is split, one task blinds you to the other. So resist the temptation to record your observations when the basilisk turns its head or the enemy breaks your shield wall. It can wait. Discoveries are not made by the first to observe them, but by the first to survive them.

Insinoori Tonttu

SAVING THROWS

Much like ability checks, saving throws really lend themselves to degrees of success or failure, both in narrative and in mechanics. The degree of success tables below expand the "Degrees of Failure" option (*Dungeon Master's Guide*) for success and failure in saving throws.

The two tables here cover both main types of saving throws: saves to entirely avoid an effect, damage, or a condition; and saves to halve damage from an effect. For compatibility with saving throw outcomes presented in monster stat blocks etc, apply the rule of "Specific Beats General" (*Player's Handbook*) and follow any specific outcomes described elsewhere.

SAVING THROW TO AVOID EFFECT

Roll	Effect	Damage	Conditions
Critical Failure (10-)	Maximum effect	Take maximum damage	Double duration. Disadvantage on saves to end condition
Heavy Failure (5-)	Enhanced effect	Reroll low damage dice once	Double duration
Failure (1-)	Usual effect	Usual damage	Usual effect
Marginal (0)	Partial effect	Half damage	Half duration. Advantage on saves to end condition
Success (1+)	Negates	Negates	Negates
Strong Success (5+)	Negates. Automatic success for rest of day if same save type from same source	Negates. Automatic success for rest of day if same save type from same source	Negates. Automatic success for rest of day if same save type from same source
Critical Success (10+)	Negates. Automatic success for rest of day if same source	Negates. Automatic success for rest of day if same source	Negates. Automatic success for rest of day if same source

STUDY NOTES

A choice to explore the mysteries of the multiverse is a choice to see its extremes. A journey of highs and lows, stunning successes and bitter failures.

Insinoori Tonttu

SAVING THROW TO HALVE DAMAGE

Roll	Damage
Critical Failure (10-)	Take maximum damage (damage dice count as their highest possible roll)
Heavy Failure (5-)	Reroll low damage dice once (replaces their original rolls)
Failure (1-)	Usual damage
Marginal (0)	Half damage but reroll low damage dice rolls once
Success (1+)	Half damage
Strong Success (5+)	Quarter damage
Critical Success (10+)	No damage



COMBAT

Combat is perhaps the most visible and iconic of the three pillars of adventuring in D&D. If you enjoy the details and narrative of combat, this section discusses two core options that may add further depth: degree of success and defense. These options are distinct but complimentary and may be used individually or together. There are also related options for critical hits and fumbles, and for ability modifiers. Additional options for specific combat situations and tactics are presented in Part 2.

DEGREE OF SUCCESS: COMBAT

Degree of success can also be applied to combat and is similarly intuitive in describing the quality of an attack. A better attack bonus increases the chance of hitting and of hitting well, increasing damage by shifting the degree of success towards strong and critical hits. Equally, armor not only reduces the chance of being hit but also the success margin, reducing the damage being dealt by that strike.

On average, degree of success will slightly increase the damage being done per attack (whether melee, ranged, or spell), as additional strong and critical hits will usually more than balance the glancing blows. The same will be seen with heavy and critical failures from saving throws, so the effect is largely similar across different sources of damage.

Roll	Outcome
Critical Failure (10-)	Critical Fumble - Provokes an opportunity attack in melee, or misfire if ranged
Heavy Failure (5-)	Miss (note no additional effect)
Failure (1-)	Miss
Marginal (0)	Glancing Blow - half damage
Success (1+)	Hit - usual damage
Strong Success (5+)	Strong Hit - reroll any number of damage dice once (replaces their original roll)
Critical Success (10+)	Critical Hit - maximum damage (damage dice count as their highest possible roll)

ABILITY MODIFIER DAMAGE

Various ability modifiers can affect attack bonuses. With degree of success, this also translates into increased damage by increasing the success margin and scoring more strong and critical hits. Since this captures the impact of ability, the damage roll bonus can more specifically be power. You can reflect this by only using Strength for the damage roll bonus. This includes ranged attacks, where draw strength (or throwing strength) is important (but not spells or firearms). When using this option, Dexterity can be used for any weapon's attack bonus (not just finesse weapons).

CRITICAL HITS AND FUMBLES

CRITICAL HITS AS MAXIMUM DAMAGE

This is a variant for critical hit damage. Instead of doubling damage dice, use the maximum of the damage dice (so each dice counts as its highest possible roll). This has a similar average effect, but never does less damage than a normal hit (or strong hit) and is balanced by avoiding extremes from high rolls on doubled dice. Essentially a critical hit becomes the highest possible damage that a hit might normally achieve.

EFFECTS THAT INCREASE DAMAGE DICE

Divine Smites, Sneak Attacks, Martial Advantage, Orcish Fury, etc, involve extra damage dice being added to the original damage roll. These would double under standard rules and instead count as their maximum with this variant. Brutal Criticals, Savage Attacks, etc, where extra critical hit dice are added only to critical hits, are not doubled under standard rules, so the maximum isn't used with this variant.

OPTIONS FOR FIXED BONUSES

Usually, extra damage dice and fixed bonuses are treated differently, with extra dice affected by a critical hit, but fixed bonuses (such as ability modifiers and magical bonuses) not. Optionally, you may choose to treat both the same: either having both affected by a critical hit (treat extra damage dice as their maximum value as above, but also double any fixed bonuses), or having neither affected by a critical hit.

CRITICAL FUMBLES

MELEE

A critical fumble on a melee attack (or melee spell attack), provokes an opportunity attack from the target. You can avoid the opportunity attack if you have another attack that turn and choose to use it to rescue the fumble instead, preventing the opportunity attack from being triggered.

RANGED

A critical fumble on a ranged attack (or ranged spell attacks), results in a misfire. The attack is then rerolled against a random ally within range, including yourself. You can avoid the misfire if you have another attack that turn and choose to use it to rescue the fumble instead, preventing the misfire.



DEFENSE

In this variant to the combat rules, attack success is influenced by the skill of the defender as well as the attacker. By bringing defensive ability into the attack roll, it doesn't need to be reflected in hit points, which can become more specifically health and toughness ("Damage and Healing", page 9).

To achieve this, two additional numbers are included when you calculate your Armor Class (AC): your proficiency bonus, and a -4 correction factor (which maintains balance with the core rules).

So a level 5 fighter (proficiency bonus of +3), with a Dexterity of 15 (ability modifier of +2), and wearing scale mail armor (base AC 14), has an AC of $12 + 2 + 3 - 4 = 13$.

At lower levels, this will slightly increase the chance of being hit (and the chance of higher damage from degree of success). While at higher levels, both will decrease. These effects balance well with the "Gritty Progression" option (page 9) and you should consider using both options together.

DEFENSE DICE

A variant for the defense option is to use it alongside the "Proficiency Dice" option (*Dungeon Master's Guide*), allowing players to roll a proficiency die ("defense die") when defending, instead of applying the fixed proficiency bonus to their AC. Rolling your chance to influence an attack (and, with degree of success, its damage) can be fun for players and is intuitive. However, if you choose to use the defense option for monsters as well (see below), it is easier and faster for the DM to use the fixed proficiency bonuses for the monsters.

MONSTERS

Although you don't need to extend the defense option to monsters, it is possible. Their proficiency bonus can be determined by their challenge rating (Monster Statistics by Challenge Rating table, *Dungeon Master's Guide*), leading to the AC adjustment in the table below. This maintains the same balance as the standard system when PCs and monsters have similar levels.

MONSTER ARMOR CLASS BY CHALLENGE RATING

CR	Proficiency Bonus	AC Adjustment
0-4	+2	-2
5-8	+3	-1
9-12	+4	no change
13-16	+5	+1
17-20	+6	+2
21-24	+7	+3
25-28	+8	+4
29-30	+9	+5



However, to avoid conversions for monsters, you can instead choose to apply the defense variant to PCs (and perhaps NPCs) only. As mentioned above, the "Gritty Progression" option in the next section provides an effective counterbalance for the change in AC with level, so would then also be used for PCs only. PCs will be hit slightly more often at lower levels but will have higher total hp, and they will be hit slightly less often at higher levels but will then have lower total hp. Monsters would simply work the way they do in the standard rules, avoiding any need for conversion. Which is fine - a gelatinous cube really is more about absorbing hp than fencing with its pseudopodia.

STUDY NOTES

If there is one main driver for change in this world, it is conflict. So if you are forced to fight, fight for change. I have found that heavy objects produce the most effective change.

Insinoori Tonttu

DAMAGE AND HEALING

The variant options presented here create a stricter interpretation of hit points (hp) as a precious and exhaustible resource of health and resilience. This can make for a more tangible sense of peril and also allows meaningful trade-offs between short term gain from overexertion and longer term constraints from depleting a resource that recovers slowly.

HIT POINTS

Direct scaling of hp with level results in a steep rise from a very low start at level 1. Although a sense of peril is important, a single unlucky injury can be fatal at this level. For variant rules where hp is more specifically health and toughness, the rapid scaling is less justifiable, as is rapid recovery after injury. In the options here, hp start higher so that the increase with level is less exponential (roughly doubling only with each tier of play). That change in scaling, along with grittier healing and the increased damage from "Degree of Success", can rebalance peril through all tiers of play. It also balances the effects of the "Defense" option.

Consider applying these changes to PCs only. They can be extended to NPCs and possibly monsters as well, but there is no need and it is simpler to use their existing stat blocks without conversion. At low levels the PCs will have higher base hp than their opponents but the opponents will be coming into the fight uninjured - unlike the PCs.

CONSTITUTION IN STARTING HP

To give characters more baseline fortitude, calculate level 1 hp by taking the maximum of the class Hit Die as usual, but then add your Constitution score (the ability score itself) rather than the Constitution modifier. You can consider this as your Constitution contributing your baseline health and your class contributing the benefits of training.

GRITTY PROGRESSION

The better option for a more tangible sense of peril and especially suited to games using the "Defense" option. You gain a Hit Die (and add the usual Constitution modifier) only every odd level (so level 3, 5, 7, etc). To convert hp for a character created with the standard rules, simply half and then add the Constitution score. This can also be applied to NPCs and possibly monsters (same conversion), particularly if those are also using the defense option, but is not essential.

HEROIC PROGRESSION

An alternative option for a game with more epic characters that can shrug off more injuries at higher levels. You gain a Hit Die (and add the usual Constitution modifier) every level as usual. To convert hp for a character created with the standard rules, simply add Constitution score.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER USES OF HP

HP totals are used for all-or-nothing effects, such as Sleep or the Power Word spells. You may wish to adjust these by adding the caster's spellcasting ability score to the hp total.

REST AND RECOVERY

The "Slow Healing" and "Gritty Realism" options for slower hp recovery (*Dungeon Master's Guide*) work well to reflect physical injury but a more specific Natural Recovery variant is described here.

NATURAL RECOVERY

SHORT REST

Although very little actual healing happens in 1 hour, important stabilization is possible: stopping blood loss, replacing fluids, cleaning / covering / stitching wounds, strapping joints, splinting bones, etc. A single Hit Die (plus Constitution modifier) may be spent when you finish a short rest if there has been hp loss since the last short rest. You can only have up to 3 short rests per day.

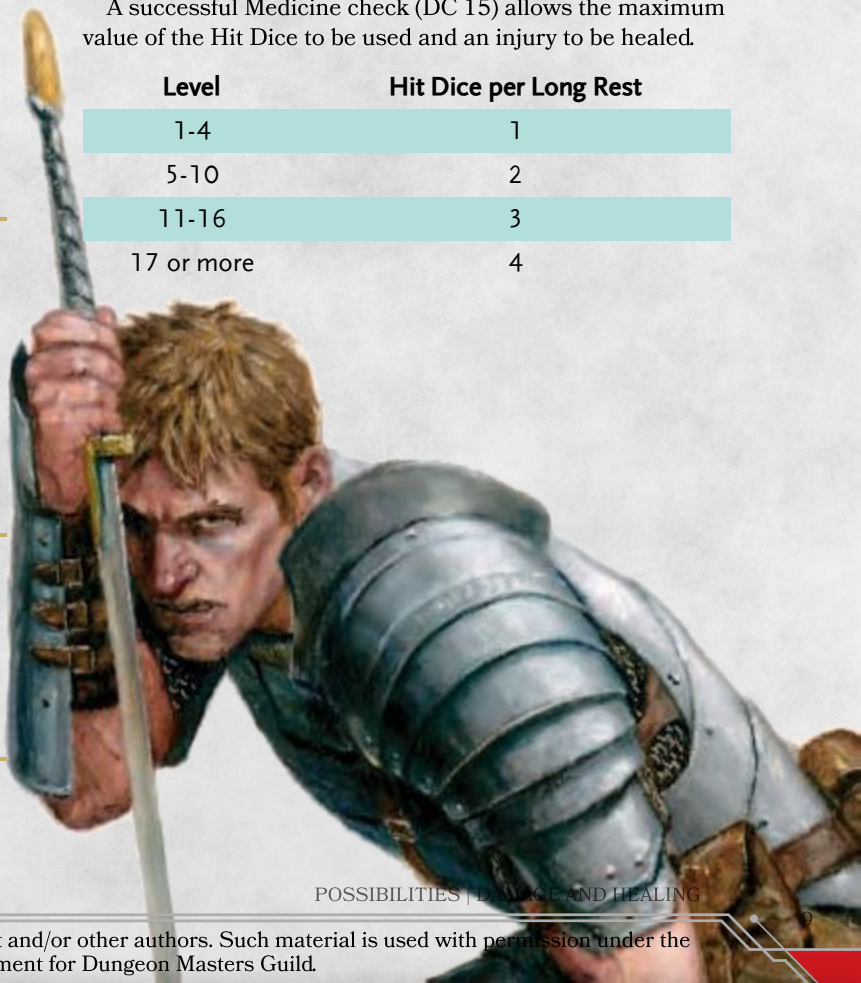
A successful Medicine check (DC 15) allows the maximum value of the Hit Die to be used.

LONG REST

More healing can occur with a long rest but a number of days may be required to heal fully. You can only have 1 long rest per day. A single Hit Die (plus Constitution modifier) may be spent when you finish a long rest and a single Hit Die is regained before or after this. At 5th level, 2 Hit Dice may be spent and regained, with 3 Hit Dice at 11th level and 4 Hit Dice at 17th level (see table below). A level of exhaustion is also recovered, so long as you've ingested some food and drink. If you've gained a level during a day, the benefits of your new level only begin after you finish a long rest.

A successful Medicine check (DC 15) allows the maximum value of the Hit Dice to be used and an injury to be healed.

Level	Hit Dice per Long Rest
1-4	1
5-10	2
11-16	3
17 or more	4



NEGATIVE HIT POINTS

With this variant, damage greater than your remaining hp takes you below 0 and determines your chance of recovery. This is a dangerous situation to be in and takes its toll. If you do recover, you initially only recover to 0 hp, where you are unconscious but stable.

DROPPING BELOW 0 HP

When you drop below 0 hp, you take a level of exhaustion.

WHILE YOU HAVE LESS THAN 0 HP:

- During your turn, you can't take any actions but you can spend a Hit Die (or take a level of exhaustion to spend a Hit Die if no Hit Dice left) to heal that roll (plus Constitution modifier).
- Another creature can attempt to stabilize you by performing a Medicine check (DC 10 plus the number of hp below 0), to bring your hp back to 0.
- You don't heal past 0 hp in a single turn. Healing that would take you past 0 hp, instead heals you to 0 hp.
- At the end of your turn, you must succeed on a death saving throw (Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 plus the number of hp below 0) or take another level of exhaustion. If using "Degree of Success", see optional table below. Reaching level 6 exhaustion results in death (*Player's Handbook*).

AT 0 HP (UNCONSCIOUS BUT STABLE):

- You recover consciousness when you heal to 1 hp or more.
- After you finish a short or long rest, you naturally recover consciousness and 1 hp (plus any Hit Dice spent).

DEATH SAVING THROW - DEGREE OF SUCCESS

Roll	Effect
Critical Failure (10-)	Take 1 level of exhaustion. Then make an additional death saving throw this turn
Heavy Failure (5-)	Take 1 level of exhaustion. Death saving throw next turn is with disadvantage
Failure (1-)	Take 1 level of exhaustion
Marginal (0)	Death saving throw next turn is with disadvantage
Success (1+)	No effects
Strong Success (5+)	Death saving throw next turn is with advantage
Critical Success (10+)	Stabilized (hp recover to 0)

GRITTY INJURY VARIANTS

For a more gritty campaign, you may chose a grittier variant with additional effects from dropping below 0 hp:

- Hit point maximum permanently reduced by 1
- Lingering Injury: make a roll on the Lingering Injuries table (*Dungeon Master's Guide*)

- Any healing is reduced by half when at 0 or negative hp
- and/or Stunned for a round when recover consciousness.

KNOCKING A CREATURE OUT

You can avoid taking a creature below 0 hp in melee by intentionally pulling your blow. You must decide to do this before you roll damage. This halves the damage but if that takes them below 0 hp, reduce their hp to 0 instead.

STUDY NOTES

"The flame that burns twice as bright burns half as long"

MAXIMUM EFFORT

With the options in this section, Hit Dice become a valuable limited resource. The following overexertion options can then allow alternative uses of Hit Dice or exhaustion in desperate circumstances.

HEROIC EFFORT

You may spend one Hit Die (or level of exhaustion if no Hit Dice left) to:

- Add to any roll: ability checks (including initiative), saves (including death saving throws), attack rolls, damage rolls.
- Add to the DC for a spell you are casting.
- Add to your AC until the start of your next turn.
- Gain temporary points for a duration of 1 minute (hit points, sorcery points, ki points, etc).
- Recover a temporary spell slot up to your proficiency bonus (or spell points if using the variant from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) for a duration of 1 minute.
- Or in place of spending a special die (e.g. superiority die, Bardic Inspiration die, Psionic Energy die, defense die).

You must then finish a short or long rest before you can do this again.

HEROIC EXERTION

You may spend a level of exhaustion to reroll any roll you make, any attack against you, or any damage rolls from a single attack (by you or against you). You must then finish a short or long rest before you can do this again.



SPELLCASTING

Spellcasting in fifth edition is reliable, with a spell successfully cast whenever there is a suitable spell slot available. There may then be an attack roll or saving throw but the casting itself is certain.

However, your setting or campaign might want to explore a more fickle magic from a less dependable Weave.

SPELL SUCCESS ROLL

With this optional rule, you make a spell success roll whenever you attempt to cast a spell. You can apply this to all spells, or choose to limit it to those where there is not already an attack roll or saving throw.

The DC for a spell is 10 plus twice the spell level. Your casting bonus is the maximum spell level you can cast, plus your proficiency bonus, plus your spellcasting ability modifier.

Fireball (a 3rd level spell) would have a DC of $10 + 3 + 3 = 16$. While a level 5 wizard (proficiency bonus +3, maximum spell level of 3), with an Intelligence of 16 (ability modifier of +3), has a casting bonus of $3 + 3 + 3 = 9$. So if the wizard rolls 7 or more on a d20 (70% chance), they can successfully cast the fireball (roll of 7, plus casting bonus of 9, equals 16).

The DC for an upcast spell uses the spell level it was cast at. If you choose to use spell success rolls for cantrips as well, then count these as 0 level spells.

A failed spell doesn't use up a spell slot.

CASTING ADVANTAGE & DISADVANTAGE

Another spellcaster who is able to cast the same spell may use the Help action to aid you in casting that spell, allowing you to roll the spell success roll with advantage. Conversely, conditions that cause you to make all ability checks with disadvantage (for example, the frightened or poisoned conditions, or level 3 exhaustion) also impose disadvantage on spell success rolls. If you are casting with disadvantage, it may be safer to stick to lower level spells.

RESCUING A POOR CASTING

Unless you roll a 1, you can spend any number of Hit Dice to increase the roll (Hit Dice always count as d6s, even if you have larger Hit Dice available) or take a level of exhaustion to reroll.

SPELL-LIKE ABILITIES AND MONSTERS

Some PCs have spells or spell-like abilities that don't use spell slots and often represent an innate ability. This is also the norm for monsters. These spells or effects are generally limited in choice and in number of uses. You may therefore



wish to consider these being more innately reliable, with no need for a spell success roll.

MORE CHALLENGING MAGIC

If your campaign setting is particularly challenging for magic, you can increase the base DC from 10, or use a DC of 10 plus three times the spell level. You may even consider a failed spell using up a spell slot but this can be frustrating for players.

Some campaigns link magic to life energy. That is a very specific application and is outside the scope of this handbook but can be adapted using a higher DC and more reliance on the use of Hit Dice (your own, or perhaps those of others) or other energy sources.

DISRUPTING A SPELL

If another creature can detect that you are in the process of casting a spell (for example, can see the somatic component or hear the verbal component), the act of casting can be used to trigger a reaction before the spell completes (for example, if the creature has Readied an Attack or movement).

If you take damage while casting a spell with a casting time of 1 or more rounds, it may disrupt your concentration and cause the spell to fail. You must make the usual Constitution saving throw (DC 10 or half the damage you take, whichever number is higher) to allow the spell to proceed.

DEGREE OF SUCCESS: SPELLS

Degree of success can also be applied to the spell success roll option. If you are using degree of success for spell attack rolls and saving throws, you may be happy with pass-or-fail spell success rolls. However, if you would like to add some further depth and excitement to that roll, degree of success also provides some balance for spellcasters failing their spells, as a critical success is more likely than with other rolls and a critical failure very rare (unless using a higher DC variant with the "More Challenging Magic" variant).

The table below separates spells into those with targets and those without, so as to divide heavy and critical failures into misfires and surges. For a successful spell, the higher the roll, the closer it looks to how it should do and players may enjoy describing how a spell differs from its intent.

Roll	Spells with a Target	Other Spells
Critical Failure (10-)	Critical Misfire: switch target to you, or from you to a random target. You can't cast further spells of that level or higher until you finish a short or long rest	Critical Surge: you take 6 damage, and others within 30 ft take 1d6 force damage, for each level of the spell. You can't cast further spells of that level or higher until you finish a short or long rest
Heavy Failure (5-)	Misfire: switch to a random other target	Surge: take 1d6 damage for each level of the spell
Failure (1-)	Fizzles	Fizzles
Marginal (0)	Very odd appearance. Disadvantage on spell attack roll. Advantage on saves against spell	Very odd appearance. Disadvantage on spell attack roll. Advantage on saves against spell
Success (1+)	Acceptable appearance	Acceptable appearance
Strong Success (5+)	Appears exactly as described	Appears exactly as described
Critical Success (10+)	Perfect. You may cause any one roll within the spell to be rerolled, replacing the original roll	Perfect. You may cause any one roll within the spell to be rerolled, replacing the original roll

WILD MAGIC VARIANT

Instead of using misfires and surges, you may wish to use the Wild Magic Surge table from the Wild Magic sorcerous origin (*Player's Handbook*).

CONCENTRATION

Finally, the degree of success option also fits well with Constitution saving throws when trying to maintain concentration on a spell (either an active spell or, if using the "Disrupting a Spell" option, one being cast). Simply use the Other Spells column in the table above.



STUDY NOTES

If the Weave is a puzzle, it is one without answers. I have long suspected that its mystery is the source of its power. If we harness it with rules, can it still do and be everything and anything?

Insinoori Tonttu

PART 2

Additional Options



TACTICAL COMBAT

In the following sections, additional options for combat tactics, spellcasting, equipment, and feats are described. As with the core options in Part 1, these may be used individually or together. Indeed, the options here in Part 2 have a narrower focus, with less effect on core mechanics, so are easily swapped in or out as required. This first section focuses on combat and tactics, with options that add a layer of situational depth to combat. Ability checks in combat were covered in Part 1.

BEING OUTNUMBERED

Fighting two (or more) opponents at the same time is very difficult: it is hard to defend against an opponent when also needing to look out for attacks from another. The Help action (*Player's Handbook*), optional flanking rules (*Dungeon Master's Guide*), and abilities like Pack Tactics (*Monster Manual*) can represent this but two simple alternative options are presented here that may be used instead of flanking.

For these rules, a melee group is a group of combatants where each creature is within melee attack range of at least one opponent in that group.

VARIANT 1: ADVANTAGE

If during an attacker's turn, their side outnumbers the opponents by at least 2:1 in that melee group (so double as many attackers as defenders), then the attacker has advantage on attack rolls against those opponents.

VARIANT 2: ATTACK BONUS MODIFIER

This variant uses attack bonus modifiers rather than advantage. If during an attacker's turn, their side outnumbers the opponents in that melee group, then the attacker gains a +1 to their attack bonus against those opponents. If their side outnumbers the opponents by 2:1, they gain +2 instead. If they outnumber the opponents by 3:1, they gain +3, and so on.

LEAVING YOURSELF OPEN

In a fight, a creature's actions can create an opening for an opportunity attack. With this variant, some additional situations provoke attacks from opponents in melee range.

Movements that provoke an opportunity attack in melee:

- Moving out of your opponent's range
- Standing from prone
- Picking up an item from the ground (e.g. recovering a weapon after being disarmed)

Actions that provoke an opportunity attack in melee:

- Casting a spell with a casting time of more than 1 action, or a casting time of 1 action if the range is more than 15 ft
- Making a ranged attack
- Any action that actively ignores your opponent

You don't provoke an opportunity attack when you teleport or

when someone or something moves you without using your movement, action, or reaction.

You can avoid provoking an opportunity attack by taking the Disengage or Fend actions (see below). If using the "Disrupting a Spell" option (page 11), the opportunity attack provoked by casting a spell usually triggers after the spell is complete, unless it has a casting time of more than 1 round, or the creature Readied an Attack for the act of casting itself.

DISENGAGE

This option expands on the Disengage action (*Player's Handbook*). As with the standard Disengage action, your movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks for the rest of the turn. In addition:

- If you take the Disengage action and can normally make more than one attack with the Attack action, you may choose to make one of those attacks as your bonus action.

FEND

Fend is a bonus action available with some feats. When you take the Fend bonus action, your main action doesn't provoke opportunity attacks for the rest of the turn.

Note that there are times when the Dodge action may be more useful than Disengage or Fend.



MELEE REACH AND SPACE

CLOSING RANGE

This optional rule applies when a combatant moves within reach of an opponent whose melee weapon has a longer reach. Much like the Polearm Master feat, this provokes an opportunity attack. When determining a difference in reach, weapons with the reach property have the longest reach, followed by those that are two-handed (or versatile), followed by all other weapons, except for those with the light property which have the shortest reach.

There are number of circumstances where closing range doesn't provoke an opportunity attack (unless the defender has a polearm and the Polearm Master feat):

- If the opponent is surprised
- If the attacker is hidden from the opponent
- If the opponent is already engaged in combat with another attacker
- If the attacker is wielding a shield
- Or if the attacker teleports (or equivalent) directly within range

Note that if the attacker does close, the opponent may retreat on their turn to re-establish their range. However, unless they take the Disengage action, that retreat may itself provoke an opportunity attack.

When an attacker successfully closes range, opponents with the longest reach weapons may also find their weapons less effective if then affected by "Restricted Space" or if held in "Grappling Range" (see following).

RESTRICTED SPACE

In a restricted space where 5 ft range can't be maintained (a narrow dungeon corridor, thick forest, or the crush of certain stages of a larger melee), attackers with more than 5 ft reach (for example, wielding weapons with the reach property) have disadvantage on attack rolls, unless used in a close reach mode (for example, the butt of the weapon: usually 1d2 damage unless specially designed 1d4).

Note the hapless attacker trying to close range with the short reach weapon above may then try to pin their target into a corner, or against another attacker, to level the playing field - a halberd isn't as effective when you can only punch out with the butt of it.

GRAPPLING RANGE

In extreme restricted space (or during a grapple), weapons with more than 5 ft reach can't be used at all to attack, unless used in a close reach mode. Even in close reach mode, they have disadvantage on attack rolls (it may even be wiser to drop the weapon and fight unarmed or with a knife). Even mid-range weapons (any weapon without the light property) have disadvantage on attack rolls unless using the pommel etc (usually 1d2 damage unless specially designed 1d4). This is when the dagger finds its true calling and creates space for the close combat / grappling specialist. Note the Grappler feat gives advantage on attacks while grappling, which may be particularly relevant for rogues.

If the attacker wants to get within grappling range and stay there, play this as an attempted grapple (*Player's Handbook*),

using one of the attacker's attacks. If not already within reach, the attacker would need to close range first, provoking an opportunity attack. If the opportunity attack lands, then the grapple check is with disadvantage.

STUDY NOTES

Being in a tight spot is often described as a bad thing. However, I have found that a tight spot is the best place for a scholar with a sharpened quill and a working knowledge of pressure points.

Insinoori Tonttu

LIMITED DEFENSE

There are situations where an individual can't defend to their full ability, and conditions such as being paralyzed, restrained, stunned, etc are covered in the *Player's Handbook*. Some small adjustments may be considered:

- Defender unable to use weapon / shield (e.g. arms bound): Adjust AC by removing bonuses from the shield (and/or weapon) and their proficiency bonus (Defense option)
- Defender unable to move freely (e.g. legs bound): Attacker rolls with advantage as per standard rules. Also remove any (positive) Dexterity bonus from defender's AC.
- Defender unable to move body / react (e.g. restrained or stunned): Both of the above apply.
- Defender fully immobilized (e.g. paralyzed or unconscious): All of the above apply plus any attack at a range of 5 ft or less is automatically a critical hit.
- A defender who actively ignores a melee attacker is treated as restrained for that attack.



RANGED ATTACK INTO MELEE

This is a common situation for many adventuring parties (both for ranged weapons and for spell attacks) but is of course difficult and not without risk. The following option formalizes the use of cover with a simple guide for how much cover to apply.

COVER

Apply cover when your target is in melee. If your allies are smaller in size or in number than your opponents, apply half cover (+2 to target's AC). Otherwise apply three-quarters cover (+5 to target's AC).

FRIENDLY FIRE

This additional option is an alternative to the "Hitting Cover" option (*Dungeon Master's Guide*). If a creature misses with a ranged attack into melee (including a ranged spell attack), reroll as an attack on one of their allies (you can select the most appropriate ally if obvious, or select at random). You may wish to limit this to misses that would have hit if not for the cover modifier, as with the Hitting Cover option. If you are using the "Degree of Success" option for combat, friendly fire occurs instead on a critical fumble with a ranged attack.

CALLED SHOT

This is a general flexible option to cover an attacker wanting to target a specific part of their opponent's body, or wanting to have a specific effect such as a trip, or to lock blades, grab with the off-hand, pin weapon, disarm, or anything else. The attacker must declare their intention before making the attack roll. Simply apply a -1 to -10 modifier on the attack roll, depending on the difficulty (see Called Shot Difficulty table, where assumed chance is the typical chance for matched opponents).

A called shot can't be attempted if it takes

the roll needed to hit above 20, nor can limited-use attack bonuses or automatic hits be used for these actions.

The default modifier can be considered -5 (note that this parallels degree of success) but if you wish to vary from this, then use this rule of thumb:

CALLED SHOT DIFFICULTY

Modifier	Difficulty	Assumed Chance
-2	Relatively simple	about a 50% chance
-4	Doable with a good hit	about a 40% chance
-6	Requires some luck	about a 30% chance
-8	Unlikely	about a 20% chance
-10	Possible but improbable	about a 10% chance

COMBAT STANCE IN MELEE

DEFENSIVE

When taking the Attack action with a melee weapon, for every 2 proficiency bonus points sacrificed from attack bonus, add 1 to your AC, until your next turn.

AGGRESSIVE

Or, visa versa, when taking the Attack action with a melee weapon, for every 2 proficiency bonus points sacrificed from AC (Defense option), add 1 to your attack bonus for melee attacks, until your next turn.

PROFICIENCY DICE

This is possible with the "Proficiency Dice" option (*Dungeon Master's Guide*) as well (moving up or down the equivalent proficiency dice) but becomes more cumbersome.



SPELL OPTIONS

This section contains additional options for spells, with personalization, increased spell slot flexibility, and an option to handle teleporting into melee. Each option can be used with any (or none) of the others, including "Spell Success Rolls", "Disrupting a Spell", "Degree of Success", "Maximum Effort", and "Leaving Yourself Open".

DEVELOPING SPELLS

Players can have their own versions of spells that are mechanically identical but add flavor, and entertainment, by having a personalized appearance. *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* now formalizes this with excellent guidance on how to personalize a character's spells to fit a theme that is meaningful for them. If using spell success rolls with degree of success, the success margin also determines if the spell ends up looking the way it was intended.

This may inspire players to want to develop spells that are also mechanically different. This is a bigger undertaking, requiring a consideration of game balance, and in-game resources (time and cost). Balance is easier with variant spells than new ones and there is guidance under "Creating a Spell" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. There are also many homebrew collections that may provide inspiration, although balance can be variable, depending on the source.

This option provides in-game mechanics for developing a new spell, using a three stage process: research, development, and testing. Each stage has a requirement in terms of time and cost that will need repeated if that stage is unsuccessful.

Level The maximum level of spell that a PC can develop should be one level below their own spell level in that class.

Time. It should take significant downtime to develop a new spell: 1 week per level, for each of the three stages.

Cost. Developing a new spell should also be expensive. 100 gp per level per week is reasonable.

Stage 1 - Research. This stage reflects the study required to develop the theory underlying the spell. To successfully complete the research stage, the character must succeed in an Arcana skill check (using their spellcasting ability) with a DC of 15 plus twice the spell level.

Stage 2 - Development. This stage reflects the practical development of the spell from the research theory. It requires a successful Investigation skill check (using their spellcasting ability) with a DC of 15 plus twice the spell level.

Stage 3 - Testing. This stage reflects mastery of the spell to the point where it can be finalized and reliably cast. If using the spell success roll option, the character must succeed in a spell success roll with an additional penalty on the DC of the spell's level (so the DC is now 10 plus three times the spell level). If not using the spell success roll option, you may substitute a successful Performance skill check (using their spellcasting ability), with a DC of 15 plus twice the spell level.

You may want to use the degree of success option for these sequential checks (page 5). Any critical failure means the spell can't be attempted again, heavy failure that you must restart from Stage 1. The Stage 3 result would apply to the first time you then cast the spell.



SPELL SLOT FLEXIBILITY

A simple way to increase spell slot flexibility at a cost is to allow a higher slot to be used for a lower level spell as usual, but to also allow two lower level slots to be sacrificed to recover a spent slot from the next level. So a player with two remaining level 2 slots and one remaining level 3 slot, could use the level 2 slots to recover an expended level 3 slot, and use those level 3 slots to recover an expended level 4 slot.

TELEPORTING INTO MELEE

Teleporting into combat is a relatively common strategy and may cause a surprise attack if the teleporting creature was hidden. However the effect during ongoing combat is not defined. With this option, when a creature teleports within melee range of another creature they have advantage on their first melee attack roll against that creature that turn. If you want, this can require a successful contested Dexterity check if repeated against the same creature.

STUDY NOTES

Of course, we are not the only ones experimenting with the laws of the multiverse. Our wizardly colleagues have forged their own path straight through reality.

Insinoori Tonttu

EQUIPMENT

SHIELDS

A shield has a number of useful roles in combat. These options add to those of the core rules and the Shield Master feat. Although shield size and shape vary, the balance of cover and maneuverability across a range of sizes may lead to a similar defensive benefit via that trade-off between active and passive defense. Very small shields are a little different and are treated separately below.

COVER

Perhaps the most historically relevant role of shields. When taking the Dodge action outside of melee (i.e. not within reach of an opponent), a shield can be used as three-quarters cover (AC +5) instead of its usual +2 (from shield or from half cover).

CLOSING RANGE

If using the "Closing Range" option, a shield provides cover for the wielder when closing range on an opponent with a longer reach weapon. An opportunity attack is therefore not provoked by this.

DEFENSE

If using the defense AC variant, proficiency with a shield allows the proficiency bonus to remain in the AC, even when wielding a non-proficient primary weapon (proficiency bonus would still be removed from attack bonus).

BUCKLERS AND VAMBRACES

Bucklers (very small shields) and vambraces (a form of forearm armor) can give a +1 bonus to AC when used in a free hand. They don't give the other benefits listed above but a buckler can be donned or doffed as an object interaction (does not use an action if it is the only object interacted with that turn) and vambraces allow the free hand(s) to perform other actions (e.g. sleight of hand or somatic components of a spell). Bucklers and vambraces impose the same penalties as shields if used without having proficiency with shields.

Shield	Cost	Armor Class (AC)	Weight
Shield	10 gp	+2	6 lb
Buckler	10 gp	+1	2 lb
Vambraces (pair)	15 gp	+1	3 lb

STUDY NOTES

There is a magic to the master craftman's work. A blending of skill, science, and art. Aspire to be a craftsman in everything you do.

Insinoori Tonttu



QUALITY

Many campaign settings have a region with more advanced, or more primitive, metalworking, or with superior or exotic materials, and nobody's weapons or armor work quite as well once they have picked up some major dents from a 30ft fall or a bruising battle with a stone golem.

A simple way to bring this into your game is to give an item a +1 if it is expertly made, or a -1 if it is poorly / primitively made, or damaged. If bought or sold, the cost of the item also changes (a minimum of double, or half price, respectively).

Superior or exotic materials may affect other properties: weight (and hence strength requirement for armor), bulk/sound (removing stealth disadvantage), resilience (increased integrity die size, e.g. d12, see below), or material (e.g. non-metal). Each increases cost by a minimum of double.

- Damaged or poor quality weapon: -1 to attack bonus and damage
- Damaged or poor quality armor: -1 to AC
- Expertly made weapon: +1 to attack bonus and/or damage
- Expertly made armor: +1 to AC
- Superior or exotic materials: altered properties

A +1 from quality is not magical for purposes of resistance or immunity to nonmagical weapons. The maximum total bonus from quality and any magical bonus remains +3.

An item that is -1 due to damage can be repaired for half its new cost. PCs with the relevant artisan's tools and proficiency (smith's tools for metal, leatherworker's for leather, woodcarver's for wood) may also make their own repairs with a successful DC 15 ability check. This requires 1 hour.

ACQUIRING DAMAGE

Optional sources of damage are described below.

Situational This can be thematic as part of the campaign narrative, such as the example of the stone golem above.

Critical fumble. There can be a chance of **weapon** damage on a critical fumble. You can choose the frequency of this to match the mood of the campaign. For most campaigns, use a d6 integrity die after a critical fumble, with damage occurring when you roll a 1 on the integrity die. However, a heroic campaign could use a d20 integrity die and a gritty campaign could use a d4. A superior weapon (see above) might use a larger integrity die (e.g. a d12 instead of a d6).

Extreme damage. There can be a chance of **armor** damage

when a creature takes slashing, piercing or bludgeoning damage equal to their AC or more, in a single go. Again, a nintegrity die roll would be used (for example, damage occurs when rolling a 1 on a d6 integrity die). Superior armor may use a larger integrity die (e.g. a d12). A creature wielding a **shield** can choose whether damage occurs to their shield or to their armor.

Deliberate. If using the "Called Shot" option, allow an attacker to target (-10 penalty) the weapon, armor, or shield. Or -5 penalty and allow an integrity die roll.

ADDITIONAL PROPERTIES FOR WEAPONS

With this option, weapons are given one of three new properties to allow a little more differentiation between otherwise similar items. Those three properties are:

Reliable. A weapon that is designed for dependability in dealing damage. If you roll a 1 or 2 on a damage die, you may reroll the die. Weapons with the two-handed or versatile property tend to have the penetrating property instead

Defensive. A weapon that is designed to parry or guard. Add +1 AC while wielding this weapon unless you took the

STUDY NOTES

If Necessity is the mother of Invention, then Necessity evidently gets in a lot of fights. It appears that the one field of research that truly thrives in the outside world is the development of new tools... for us to kill each other with. There are as many variants in weapons as there are in those who wield them and it is hard to know whether this is a diversity to be celebrated or feared. However, for us, it is a diversity to be studied and understood.

Insinoori Tonttu

Attack action with a different weapon during your turn.

Penetrating. A weapon that is designed to get through defenses or armor. Add +1 to your attack bonus.

To maintain balance, monsters' attacks need an equivalent bonus. For simplicity, it is recommended to treat all monsters' attacks as having the penetrating property.

WEAPONS (PART 1)

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
<i>Simple Melee Weapons</i>				
Club	1 sp	1d4 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Light, <i>reliable</i>
Dagger / Dirk	2 gp	1d4 piercing	1 lb.	Finesse, light, thrown (range 20/60), <i>penetrating</i>
Greatclub	2 sp	1d8 bludgeoning	10 lb.	Two-handed, <i>reliable</i>
Handaxe	5 gp	1d6 slashing	2 lb.	Light, thrown (range 20/60), <i>penetrating</i>
Javelin	5 sp	1d6 piercing	2 lb.	Thrown (range 30/120), <i>penetrating</i>
Light Hammer	2 gp	1d4 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Light, thrown (range 20/60), <i>penetrating</i>
Mace / Flail	5 gp	1d6 bludgeoning	4 lb.	<i>Reliable</i>
Quarterstaff	2 sp	1d6 bludgeoning	4 lb.	Versatile (1d8), <i>defensive when two-handed</i>
Sickle	1 gp	1d4 slashing	2 lb.	Light, <i>reliable</i>
Spear	1 gp	1d6 piercing	3 lb.	Thrown (range 20/60), versatile (1d8), <i>reach</i>
<i>Simple Ranged Weapons</i>				
Crossbow, light	25 gp	1d8 piercing	5 lb.	Ammunition (range 80/320), loading, two-handed, <i>penetrating</i>
Dart	5 cp	1d4 piercing	1/4 lb.	Finesse, thrown (range 20/60), <i>penetrating</i>
Shortbow	25 gp	1d6 piercing	2 lb.	Ammunition (range 80/320), two-handed, <i>penetrating</i>
Sling	1 sp	1d4 bludgeoning	—	Ammunition (range 30/120), <i>reliable</i>

WEAPONS (PART 2)

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
<i>Martial Melee Weapons</i>				
Battleaxe	10 gp	1d8 slashing	4 lb.	Versatile (1d10), <i>penetrating</i>
Flail, long	10 gp	1d10 bludgeoning	6 lb.	Heavy, two-handed, <i>reliable</i>
Glaive	20 gp	1d10 slashing	6 lb.	Heavy, reach, two-handed, <i>defensive</i>
Greataxe	30 gp	1d12 slashing	7 lb.	Heavy, two-handed, <i>penetrating</i>
Greatsword ¹	50 gp	2d6 slashing	6 lb.	Heavy, two-handed, <i>defensive</i>
Halberd	20 gp	1d10 slashing	6 lb.	Heavy, reach, two-handed, <i>penetrating</i>
Lance	10 gp	1d12 piercing	6 lb.	Reach, special, <i>penetrating</i>
Hand-and-a-Half Sword ²	30 gp	1d8 slashing	4 lb.	Versatile (1d10), <i>defensive</i>
Maul ³	10 gp	2d6 bludgeoning	10 lb.	Heavy, two-handed, <i>penetrating</i>
Morning Star ⁴	15 gp	1d8 piercing	4 lb.	<i>Reliable</i>
Pike	5 gp	1d10 piercing	18 lb.	Heavy, reach, two-handed, <i>penetrating</i>
Rapier	25 gp	1d8 piercing	3 lb.	<i>Finesse, defensive</i>
Arming Sword ⁵	25 gp	1d8 slashing	3 lb.	<i>Finesse, defensive</i>
Sabre ⁶	25 gp	1d8 slashing	3 lb.	<i>Finesse, reliable</i>
Panzerstecher	25 gp	1d8 piercing	3 lb.	<i>Finesse, penetrating</i>
(Light) Scimitar ⁷	20 gp	1d6 slashing	2 lb.	<i>Finesse, light, reliable</i>
Shortsword ⁸	10 gp	1d6 piercing	2 lb.	<i>Finesse, light, defensive</i>
Court Sword / Epee	20 gp	1d6 piercing	2 lb.	<i>Finesse, light, penetrating</i>
Trident	5 gp	1d6 piercing	4 lb.	Thrown (range 20/60), versatile (1d8), <i>reach</i>
War Pick	5 gp	1d8 piercing	2 lb.	<i>Penetrating</i>
Greatpick / Igorot	10 gp	2d6 piercing	5 lb.	Heavy, two-handed, <i>penetrating</i>
Warhammer	15 gp	1d8 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Versatile (1d10), <i>penetrating</i>
Whip	2 gp	1d4 slashing	3 lb.	<i>Finesse, reach</i>
<i>Martial Ranged Weapons</i>				
Blowgun	10 gp	1d4 piercing	1 lb.	Amm.(range 25/100), loading
Crossbow, hand	75 gp	1d6 piercing	3 lb.	Amm.(range 30/120), light, loading, <i>penetrating</i>
Crossbow, heavy	50 gp	1d10 piercing	18 lb.	Amm.(range 100/400), heavy, loading, two-handed, <i>penetrating</i>
Longbow	50 gp	1d8 piercing	2 lb.	Amm.(range 150/600), heavy, two-handed, <i>penetrating</i>
Net	1 gp	—	3 lb.	Special, thrown (range 5/15)

¹/Longsword/Medieval Claymore/Zweihänder ²/Bastard Sword/Katana/Spatha ³/Greathammer/Greatmace ⁴(Spiked Mace)/Ball-and-Chain Flail ⁵/Broadsword/Jian ⁶/Falchion/Falx/Kopis ⁷/Backsword/Dao/Messer ⁸/Gladius/Xiphos

FEATS

Feats that relate to combat or spellcasting can be adapted slightly to make additional use of the options in this handbook. These adapted feats (with changes highlighted in italics), as well as some new feats, and a slight re-working of two-weapon fighting to include defensive fighting, are listed below.

ADAPTED FEATS

ALERT

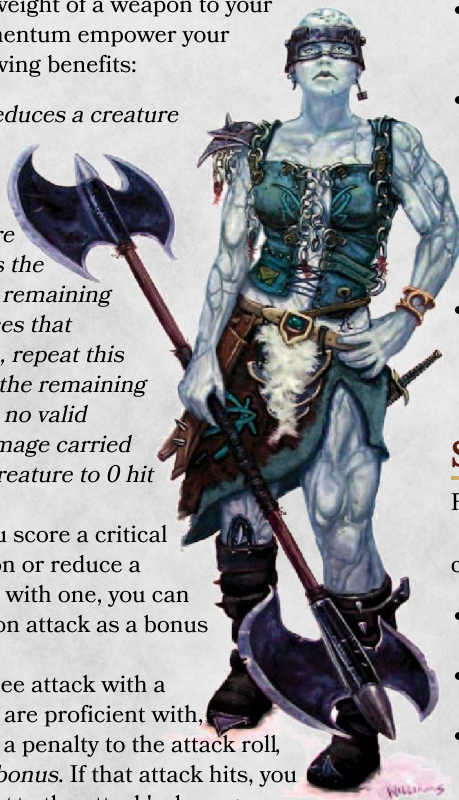
Always on the lookout for danger, you gain the following benefits:

- You can't be surprised while you are conscious.
- You gain a +5 bonus to initiative.
- Other creatures don't gain advantage on attack rolls against you as a result of being hidden from you, *outnumbering you or teleporting to attack you.*

GREAT WEAPON MASTER

You've learned to put the weight of a weapon to your advantage, letting its momentum empower your strikes. You gain the following benefits:

- *Any time your attack reduces a creature to 0 hit points, any excess damage from that attack may carry over to another creature within reach which has the same AC or less. If the remaining damage likewise reduces that creature to 0 hit points, repeat this process, carrying over the remaining damage until there are no valid targets, or until the damage carried over fails to reduce a creature to 0 hit points.*
- On your turn, when you score a critical hit with a melee weapon or reduce a creature to 0 hit points with one, you can make one melee weapon attack as a bonus action.
- Before you make a melee attack with a heavy weapon that you are proficient with, you can choose to take a penalty to the attack roll, *up to your proficiency bonus.* If that attack hits, you add *double that amount* to the attack's damage.



MAGE SLAYER

You have practiced techniques useful in combat against spellcasters, gaining the following benefits:

- When a creature within 5 feet of you *begins* casting a spell, you can use your reaction to make a melee weapon attack against that creature, *potentially disrupting the spell, even if the creature is Fending.*

- *If you are not in melee (i.e. no opponents within 5 feet of you) and a creature further than 5 feet from you begins casting a spell, you can use your reaction to make a ranged attack against that creature.*
- When you damage a creature that is concentrating on a spell, that creature has disadvantage on the saving throw it makes to maintain its concentration. *This includes saving throws against disrupting a spell.*
- You have advantage on saving throws against spells cast by creatures within 5 feet of you.

SHARPSHOOTER

You have mastered ranged weapons and can make shots that others find impossible. You gain the following benefits:

- Attacking at long range doesn't impose disadvantage on your ranged weapon attack rolls.
- Your ranged weapon attacks ignore half cover *and treat three-quarters cover as half cover.*
- *When you use the Ready action to prepare an Attack action for when creatures move in your line of sight and have multiple attacks, you may trigger each attack separately. Any attack ability that usually applies once per turn may only apply once per round.*
- Before you make an attack with a ranged weapon that you are proficient with, you can choose to take a penalty to the attack roll, *up to your proficiency bonus.* If that attack hits, you add *double that amount* to the attack's damage.



SPELL SNIPER

Prerequisite: The ability to cast at least one spell

You have learned techniques to enhance your attacks with certain kinds of spells, gaining the following benefits:

- When you cast a spell that requires you to make an attack roll, the spell's range is doubled.
- Your ranged spell attacks ignore half cover *and treat three-quarters cover as half cover.*
- *When you use the Ready action to prepare a ranged spell attack for when creatures move in your line of sight, you may also use your bonus action to Ready a ranged spell attack, so long as it has a casting time of a bonus action and one of the spells is a cantrip.*
- You learn one cantrip that requires an attack roll. Choose the cantrip from the bard, cleric, druid, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard spell list. Your spellcasting ability for this cantrip depends on the spell list you chose from: Charisma for bard, sorcerer, or warlock; Wisdom for cleric or druid; or Intelligence for wizard.

WAR CASTER

You have practiced casting spells in the midst of combat, learning techniques that grant you the following benefits:

- You have advantage on Constitution saving throws that you make to maintain your concentration on a spell when you take damage. *This includes saving throws against disrupting a spell.*
- You may Fend as a bonus action when casting a spell that turn.
- You can perform the somatic components of spells even when you have weapons or a shield in one or both hands.
- When a hostile creature's movement or actions provoke an opportunity attack from you, you can use your reaction to cast a spell at the creature, rather than making an opportunity attack. The spell must have a casting time of 1 action (or 1 bonus action) and must target only that creature.

WEAPON TRAINING (WEAPON MASTER)

You have practiced extensively with a variety of weapons, gaining the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength or Dexterity score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You gain proficiency with four weapons of your choice. Each one must be a simple or a martial weapon.

NEW FEATS

AIMING UNDER PRESSURE

Thanks to extensive practice with making ranged attacks under close pressure, you gain the following benefits:

- Being within 5 feet of a hostile creature doesn't impose disadvantage on your ranged attack or ranged spell attack rolls.
- You may Fend as a bonus action when making a ranged attack or ranged spell attack that turn.
- Having the frightened or poisoned conditions doesn't impose disadvantage on your ranged attack or ranged spell attack rolls, or on your spell success rolls.

MENTAL EXPERTISE

Through extensive training, you are an expert in focusing your mind. You gain the following benefits:

- When you have a subjected to an effect that allows you to make an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw, you may use your reaction to add your proficiency bonus to your roll for that save. This is in addition to any proficiency in that save type. You may only use this reaction before you see the saving throw roll.
- When you are subjected to any effect aiming to read or alter your mind or senses, including any effect that allows you to make an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw, you can make a DC 10 Arcana check (your choice of Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma) to identify the effect and, if successful, a second Arcana check (your choice of Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma) to identify the source.

- When you cast a spell that uses your spellcasting DC, you may use your reaction or bonus action to spend a Hit Die and add that roll to the DC for that save (the Hit Die size is always d6). You may only use this reaction before you see the saving throw roll.



MENTAL RESILIENCE

Accustomed to pushing through mental adversity, you gain the following benefits:

- When you are subjected to an effect that allows you to make an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw, you may use your reaction to spend a Hit Die and add it to your roll for that save. You may use this reaction after you see the saving throw roll, potentially making a failed saving throw into a success or changing the degree of success.
- When you are subject to an ongoing condition as a result of a failed Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw, you may take a level of exhaustion and end that condition as if you had succeeded in the saving throw.

PHYSICAL RESILIENCE

Accustomed to pushing through physical adversity, you gain the following benefits:

- When you are subjected to an effect that allows you to make a Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution, you may use your reaction to spend a Hit Die and add it to your roll for that save. You may use this reaction after you see the saving throw roll, potentially making a failed saving throw into a success or changing the degree of success.
- When you are subject to an ongoing condition as a result of a failed a Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution saving throw, you may take a level of exhaustion and end that condition as if you had succeeded in the saving throw.



SHIELD EXPERTISE

Prerequisite: Shield proficiency

Through extensive training, you have developed expertise in the defensive use of a shield. You gain the following benefits when you have a shield donned:

- You may Disengage or Fend as a bonus action.
- When another creature attacks you with a melee, ranged or spell attack, you can use your reaction to add your proficiency bonus to your AC for that attack. You may only use this reaction before you see the attack roll.

If you are using the extended defense die variant (Appendix A), you can replace this section with "You may use your reaction to gain an additional defense die."

- When you are subjected to an effect that allows you to make a Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution saving throw to avoid or reduce an effect when it first occurs, you can use your reaction to interpose or brace against your shield and add your proficiency bonus to your roll for that save. This is in addition to any proficiency in that save type. You may only use this reaction before you see the saving throw roll.

WEAPON EXPERTISE

Through extensive training, you have developed expertise in a specific weapon. Choose a weapon that you have proficiency with or choose Unarmed Strikes. You may change your choice when you gain a level in a martial class. You gain the following benefits while you are wielding that weapon (or unarmed if unarmed expertise):

- When you roll to attack with that weapon (or the Unarmed Strike), you can use your reaction or bonus action to add your proficiency bonus to the attack roll. You may use this reaction after you see the attack roll but before you know whether it is successful or not. If using an optional rule where a natural 1 usually results in a critical fumble, this negates that fumble.
- When you successfully hit with that weapon (or the Unarmed Strike), you can use your reaction or bonus action to add double your proficiency bonus to the damage.
- When you are subjected to an effect that allows you to make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw to avoid or reduce an effect when it first occurs, you can use your reaction to add your proficiency bonus to your roll for that save. This is in addition to any proficiency in that save type. You may only use this reaction before you see the saving throw roll.

WEAPON MASTERY

You have developed mastery of a specific weapon. Choose a weapon that you have proficiency with or choose Unarmed Strikes. You may change your choice when you gain a level in a martial class. You gain the following benefits while you are wielding that weapon (or unarmed if unarmed expertise):

- You gain a +1 to your attack bonus, AC, and damage.
- You have proficiency in Performance and Intimidation checks with that weapon (or unarmed if unarmed expertise) and may use Strength or Dexterity instead of Charisma for the check.



POSSIBILITIES | FEATS

WIELDING TWO WEAPONS

Historically, a small second weapon was often used alongside a full-weighted primary weapon for defense (effectively a similar role to a buckler) or for when fighting became closer-quarters. Paired light weapons were used in some fighting styles / cultures and there is historical record of highly specialized individuals using paired full-weight one-handed weapons. Below is an optional variant to the standard dual wielding rules to include a more defensive option where the second weapon size is of less importance.

TWO-WEAPON FIGHTING

When you take the Attack action and attack with a light melee weapon that you're holding in one hand, you can use a bonus action to attack with a different light melee weapon that you're holding in the other hand (you don't add your ability modifier to the damage of the bonus attack, unless that modifier is negative) or to have a +1 bonus to AC until your next turn.

If either weapon has the thrown property, you can throw the weapon, instead of making a melee attack with it.

TWO-WEAPON FIGHTING STYLE

You can use two-weapon fighting even when one of the one-handed melee weapons you are wielding isn't light.

However, if both weapons are light, you can add your ability modifier to the damage of the second weapon.

DUAL WIELDER FEAT

You master fighting with two weapons. *So long as you are proficient with both of the weapons that you are using, you gain the following benefits:*

- You gain a +1 bonus to AC while you are wielding a separate melee weapon in each hand.
- You can use two-weapon fighting, even when the one-handed melee weapons you are wielding aren't light. *If you have the Two-Weapon Fighting Style, you may add your ability modifier to the damage of both weapons.*
- You can draw or stow two one-handed weapons when you would normally be able to draw or stow only one.
- *When you use your bonus action to attack with the second weapon, you may use the same bonus action for another, different, bonus action.*
- *Alternatively, you may use your bonus action to Ready a defensive reaction for one of your weapons. When another creature attacks you with a melee attack, you can use your reaction to add your proficiency bonus to your AC for that attack. You may only use this reaction before you see the attack roll.*

If you are using the extended defense die variant (Appendix A) you can replace this section with "Alternatively, you may use your bonus action to gain an additional defense die."

STUDY NOTES

And so I must rest my quill, blot any unfinished thoughts from the parchment, and close the book on our hoard of variant realities. Contained within is our current understanding of empirical truths, part-truths, and unrecognised non-truths. A catalogue of alternate possibilities that will continue grow and evolve as the torch passes on. Do not be afraid of ripping out the odd page, or writing over my errors - it is why we write on parchment and not in stone! We must expect change when exploring a multi-verse that shifts almost as much as our fleeting understanding of it.

Insinoori Tonttu



PART 3

Experimental Options



APPENDIX A: EXPANDED DEFENSE DICE



he final part of this handbook is made up of appendices describing some more experimental options - essentially the *Unearthed Arcana* of this collection.

The options in the previous parts have all been through an extended period of evolution and refinement to smoothly integrate with the rules, and the distinctive feel, of fifth edition. Some even started life in previous editions. The options in these appendices are a little less refined, exposing a little more of their underlying mathematics. They are included for those that like to try something a bit more experimental, with rough edges that may still evolve significantly. They are very much peripheral options and so have been separated out into these experimental appendices. This first appendix (reprinted from the updated *Tome of Variance*) presents an alternative defense dice option.

DEFENSE DICE VARIANT

Defense dice are an intuitive way to represent defensive skill in D&D, allowing a player to roll to influence their chance of being hit. A simple implementation is described in the Defense option and has been very popular in the feedback.

An alternative is presented here, using a limited pool of defense dice, according to class, level, situation and actions. This variant adds further depth but actually simplifies gameplay, as the number of defense dice is limited and they replace other combat mechanics that are now represented through the defense dice pool.

As with other Defense variants in this handbook, this option is intended for PCs (and optionally NPCs with levels) only. For this Defense variant, defense dice are always **d6s** and the AC correction factor is **-3** (not -4).

GAINING DEFENSE DICE

- When combat begins, you gain a number of defense dice equal to the number of melee attacks you can make with the Attack action.
- During your turn, if you take the Attack action to make a melee attack, you gain the same number of defense dice as you have attacks. You also gain these dice when you take the Disengage or Help main actions or when you take the Ready action to ready any of these or to move. For the Dodge action, see below.
- You do not gain defense dice from taking the Attack action for a ranged attack, or from taking the Dash, Hide, Search, Spell or Use an Object actions. Similarly, you do not gain defense dice if you Ready those actions.
- Defense dice last until the start of your next turn.

USING DEFENSE DICE

When attacked with a melee attack, you may spend a defense die to add its roll to your AC, before you see the attack roll. You may spend another defense die to reroll it after you learn if the attack hits or missed.

Ranged attacks. You may only use a defense die against a ranged attack (including ranged spell attacks) if you have a

RESEARCH NOTES

I should apologise for the roughness of these laboratory jottings. We rightly emphasise the importance of keeping neat and accurate recordings of our workings, so that we may have structure and efficiency, and understand where we go wrong. The truth is, none of us follow those rules. For me, these rough scratchings better capture my unfiltered reasonings as I wrestle with new ideas. These ideas are still early, and many will fail, but somewhere in these notebook scribbles are the as yet unrefined beginnings of the-truths-of-the-future. The rest is destined for the-waste-heap-of-the-present.

Insinoori Tonttu

shield, special ability, or have taken the Dodge action.

Impaired defense. You may not use defense dice if you were surprised by your attacker that turn, or if you are prevented from actively defending (e.g. incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, restrained, stunned or unconscious).

Defending an ally. If you have more than 1 defense die, or have a shield, you may use one of your defense dice for an ally, so long as the ally or their attacker is within 5 ft of you.

DODGE (DEFENSE DICE VARIANT)

When you take the Dodge action, you focus entirely on avoiding attack, gaining double your usual number of defense dice, which you may also use against ranged attacks, and you make Dexterity Saving Throws with advantage. (In this variant, Dodge does not impose disadvantage on attack rolls made against you.)

BONUS ACTIONS: FEND & DISENGAGE

You gain a defense die when you take the Fend (or Disengage) bonus action.

EFFECTS ON OTHER OPTIONS

Defense Dice can replace or modify other options:

Flanking or Outnumbering. The limited supply of defense dice replaces the Flanking and Outnumbering options.

Leaving Yourself Open. Movements can still provoke an opportunity attack but actions do not (this is now covered by their effect on gaining Defense Dice).

Combat Stance (Defense Dice variant) You may forgo any number of attacks from your Attack action to gain an additional defense die for each. Conversely, you may spend a defense die to add to a damage roll, or spend two defense dice to add a die to an attack roll.

Evasive Fighting Style. A new fighting style. You may use defense dice against ranged attacks and may use your reaction to reroll one of your defense dice.

Shield Expertise, Dual Wielder & Defensive Duelist feats. These feats are modified to add a defense die rather than an AC proficiency bonus.

APPENDIX B: VARIANT SORCERER

This appendix (edited from the *Tome of Variance*) introduces two new variants on spellcasting, designed to reflect the more innate nature of a sorcerer's magic, and the physical strain associated with that. Common to both is a different approach to spellcasting ability and a move away from spell slots to a system more grounded in the sorcerer's own health resources and constitution. However the two variants use very different approaches to the mechanics of such a magic system.

SPELLCASTING

You have an innate connection to raw arcane power that you can channel from within, or from the world around you. You tap that power to craft your magic, limited less by supply, and more by the strain of opening and controlling this font of arcane energy that fuels your spells.

SPELLCASTING ABILITY

Constitution is your primary ability for control and supply of your magic, since your access to magic relies on your ability to cope with the raw energy that you tap. You use your Constitution when rolling Spell Success (Innate variant), or depend on it to hold on to the power you draw to fuel a spell (Channeling variant). Sometimes maintaining control of that arcane energy comes at a physical cost, taking a toll on your HD or hp.

However, you don't necessarily use your Constitution as your spellcasting ability. This depends on the nature of the spell you are casting. Sorcerers rely on their natural talents and have more affinity for spells that match those talents. Whenever a spell refers to your spellcasting ability, you use the ability that matches the spell save ability. For a spell attack, you choose any ability that you can use for a non-spell attack (usually Strength or Dexterity).

Spell save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your modifier for the save ability

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus + your ability modifier used for non-spell attacks

VARIANT SPELLCASTING (REPLACES SPELL SLOTS)

The variant sorcerers presented here don't use spell slots. Their use of spells is more fluid, although it's still a resource that becomes increasingly limited until restored with rest. The system used differs significantly between the two variants and is their defining feature, as described below.

INNATE VARIANT

For the innate variant sorcerer, your Spell Success rolls (page 11) determine the number of spells you cast in a day. You use Constitution as your Spell Success roll ability score. If your Spell Success roll succeeds, the spell is cast. If it fails, the spell fails and you can't attempt any further spells until you complete a short rest. On a heavy or critical failure, you can't attempt any further spells until you complete a long rest. You may use these options with or without other Margin of Success effects (page 12).

Each time you cast a spell, you get a cumulative -1 modifier to your Spell Success roll. This resets when you complete a long rest. So if you've already cast 3 spells that day, you make your next Spell Success roll with a -3 penalty. With this system, spells of your current level rapidly risk a failed roll and no further casting. A 5th level sorcerer may have a 75% chance of casting *Fireball* but is unlikely to succeed more than twice in a day, even if they cast no other spells. Low level spells are much more reliable, until the -1 modifiers add up.

You can overcome bad rolls by drawing on your own health energy. Using the Rescuing a Poor Casting option (page 11), you may spend any number of Hit Dice to increase the roll (Hit Dice always count as d6s, even if you have larger Hit Dice available), or you can take a level of exhaustion to reroll.

RESEARCH NOTES

Our wizardly colleagues dedicate their lives to the study and understanding of the Weave, joining many of our kindred clerics of the Domain of Knowledge in the great libraries and universities of our worlds. Which makes the more instinctive and impulsive sorcerers a closer match to those of us who follow in Our Lady Tinkerer's footsteps of more practical (and sometime impractical) experimentation. Not for them is the complex theory of arcane lore. Instead they act as conduits for a rawer form of magic, using what skill and knowledge they have to shape it, and sometimes paying a physical price to conduct and control it. We do the same for a rawer form of knowledge, wrestling it into theories and laws and frequently getting burned along the way.

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CHANNELING VARIANT

For the channeling variant sorcerer, the Spell Points system (*Dungeon Master's Guide*) determines the number of spells you cast in a day. However, you do not have immediate access to the arcane energy, or mana, that fuels those spell points. Instead you can hold a small mana reservoir but need to draw more energy to cast larger spells. This mana comes from a Source to which you have a deep innate connection, whether elemental, natural or supernatural.

DRAWING MANA

From 1st level, you are able to tap your Mana Source to channel arcane energy for your spells.

TAPPING MANA

As a bonus action on your turn, you may tap mana from your Source, gaining mana up to the highest level of sorcerer spell you know. So a 5th level sorcerer who has access to 3rd level spells may tap up to 3 mana.

GATHERING MANA

When you take the Cast a Spell action, you may Gather mana instead. This gains you mana up to the highest level of sorcerer spell you know plus your proficiency bonus. So the same 5th level sorcerer may gather up to $3 + 3 = 6$ mana.

HEROIC EFFORT

At any time, you may draw on your own health energy by spending a Hit Die to gain mana equal to that roll.

MANA POOL

The maximum mana you can channel before completing a long rest is determined by the pool of Spell Points (*Dungeon Master's Guide*) available for your sorcerer level, where each mana is a spell point and the maximum pool increases from 4 at 1st level to 133 at 20th level.

MANA RESERVOIR

You can safely hold mana equal to the highest level of sorcerer spell you know, without needing control. This is known as your mana reservoir.

CONTROLLING MANA

When you end your turn holding more mana than your reservoir, you may choose to release the excess (still counts to your daily maximum) or to try to keep hold of it by making a Constitution saving throw. The DC equals 10 plus the excess mana and a natural 1 is always a failure. If you fail this check, you lose all the mana you were holding and are unable to channel more until you complete a short rest.

MANA BURN

When you fail a Constitution saving throw to control excess mana, you may spend hit points or Hit Dice to add to that roll, potentially making the failed saving throw into a success. Or you may take a level of exhaustion to reroll.

MANA STORES

Some rare magic items may function as mana stores, increasing your mana reservoir.

CASTING SPELLS

You spend mana to cast spells, again using the Spell Points system (*Dungeon Master's Guide*), where each mana is a spell point and costs increase from 2 spell points for a 1st level spell to 13 spell points for a 9th level one.

Even if using the Spell Success roll option (page 10) for other spellcasters, you do not need to roll Spell Success for spells cast with mana (you have already successfully gathered the arcane energy for the spell and are an innate caster). If using the additional option requiring other spellcasters to also make a Spell Success roll for cantrips, then they cost 1 spell point for you.

LIFE ENERGY ALTERNATIVE

You can adapt the channeler sorcerer to use a life energy Source. Life energy may be channeled sustainably (preserver magic) or drained unsustainably (defiler magic). For this adaptation, Tapping Mana is sustainable but Gathering Mana becomes an alternative bonus action with a life energy cost (hp lost for each mana gained). This may be voluntary, with hp split evenly between yourself and any number of willing allies. Or it may be involuntary, with hp split evenly amongst all creatures within 30 ft who fail a Constitution save with DC equal to $10 + \text{your proficiency bonus} + \text{your Constitution modifier}$ (if all creatures save, no mana is drawn).

RESEARCH NOTES

The spellcasters of our world access magic in a range of different ways, even if the results can be surprisingly similar. The Weave may be beyond our ability to ever fully comprehend but however many ways we currently interact with it, there are undoubtedly more to be discovered: truly new or long forgotten. Those discoveries are unlikely to come from stuffy academic introspection; instead we need to widen our horizons and seek the answers amongst the infinite possibilities of the wider multiverse that reflect the same Weave in a multitude of different ways. If our Pandect is to grow into the rulebook of our existence, it must in part be an explorer's guide to the possibilities of those other worlds.

Insinoori Tonttu

OTHER CLASS FEATURES

All other features for these sorcerer variants are shared with the standard sorcerer (*Player's Handbook* and optional features in *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*), except Flexible Casting.

TAPPING RESERVES (REPLACES FLEXIBLE CASTING)

Since you don't use spell slots, Flexible Casting can't be used. This is replaced with Tapping Reserves. As a bonus action on your turn, you can spend a Hit Die to gain 1d6 sorcery points.

APPENDIX C: CHARACTER CREATION

Flexibility in character creation allows a broader range of concepts (and perhaps players) to be represented. The challenge is maintaining balance when this leads to optimization. *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* now formalizes some very helpful flexibility. Here are two additional options.

SAVING THROW PROFICIENCIES

With this option, players can choose their saving throw proficiencies, reflecting that their character's focus in training may differ from others with the same class (whether due to their archetype or simply their character concept).

Choose one of Dexterity, Constitution, or Wisdom, and one of Strength, Intelligence, or Charisma. You may change your selection whenever you have the Ability Score Improvement feature from gaining a level. To make that link with the focus in training, you may choose to limit alternate saving throw proficiency choices to ability scores that are 13 or higher.

CUSTOMIZING ABILITY SCORES

Allowing customization of ability scores through a wider range can better represent a player's character concept, although there may be a temptation to over-optimization. If you want to allow a wider range of ability scores, without trusting to randomly rolling them, you can use a system that aims to match the distribution of scores to what you might expect to get from balanced rolling. There are two ways of doing this. For either, you may wish to restrict how wide a range is available.

PAIRED SCORES

Here you may choose any advantageous score, so long as you match it with a disadvantageous score that is at least as rare. The standard "best-3-of-4d6" roll has a skewed distribution, so the average (mean) roll is just over 12 (rather than the central 9.5 of a straight 3d6 roll) and 12 is also the middle (median) roll. Matched probabilities are listed in the table below. A character starts with 12 in all six ability scores and you may replace a 12 with any higher number, so long as you replace a different 12 with the matched lower number.

Selected Score	Probability of rolling this or higher	Matched Score	Probability of rolling this or lower
18	1.6%	5	1.2%
17	5.8%	7	5.7%
16	13.0%	8	10.5%
15	23.1%	9	17.5%
14	35.5%	10	26.9%
13	48.8%	11	38.3%

RESEARCH NOTES

There is boundless variety in the world and while we sometimes learn something of populations, it really tells us nothing of individuals. I think I prefer it that way. Our unpredictability speaks of open doors, free will, and unconstrained potential.

Insinoori Tonttu

POINTS SYSTEM

If you want even more flexibility, you can use a points system across the six ability scores, rather than having to use matched pairs. The points system suggested here bases the difference from one score to the next on the difference in probability of rolling that high (or low).

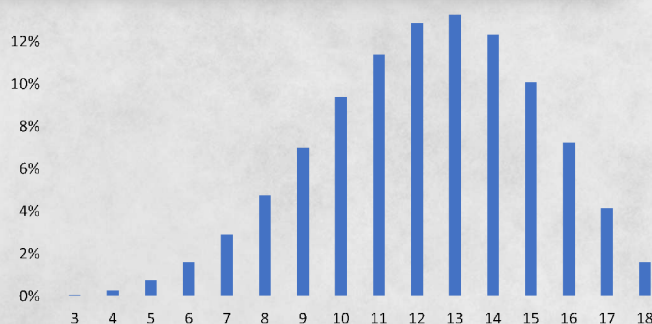
The cost for any given ability score value is listed in the table below, with a 12 as no cost. You may choose any six ability score values such that the total cost is 0 or less.

Score	Cost	Score	Cost
3	-28	11	-1
4	-21	12	0
5	-16	13	+1
6	-12	14	+2
7	-9	15	+4
8	-7	16	+7
9	-5	17	+10
10	-3	18	+16

RESEARCH NOTES

The population attribute distribution model uses a log transformation of the proportional difference in probability of achieving at least that value (either per step or from median). $\log(1.26)$ scales the minimum change (12 to 13) to 1. Rounded points then undergo a subjective rationalisation between the cumulative points per step and exact points versus median.

Insinoori Tonttu



POSSIBILITIES | APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D: OF PROBABILITIES

Degree of success leads to a change in the probability of critical success or failure, as well as adding in strong success, heavy failure, and a marginal result. With the main option's steps of +/- 5, it is relatively easy to calculate the chance of each result and ensure an acceptable balance.

ROLLING SUCCESS

"Rolling Success" (page 3) is a newer variant that uses a second roll instead of having to count +/- 5. It was included in Part 1 as it is readily interchangeable, fits the fifth edition aesthetic, and has been very popular with some playtest groups. However, it will be a new game mechanic to many and the underlying maths is not as apparent. It has been included here for a more in-depth description of its performance characteristics.

COMPARING PROBABILITIES

Since degree of success has been balanced around the main option, with its steps of +/- 5, it is important that rolling success performs similarly. In the chart below, the performance characteristics of the two are compared across a full range of "to hit" values (this range is wider than is likely to be encountered, as bounded accuracy usually involves only small deviations from a "to hit" roll of around 9 on a d20).

For both, the probabilities are presented with or without the addition of a natural 1 or 20 as a critical failure or success.

The correlation between the two variants is good, especially at less extreme target rolls. Treating a natural 1 or 20 as a critical failure or success only has a small effect when using steps of +/- 5, ensuring that there is always at least a 5% chance of these but not otherwise affecting the odds. However, treating a natural 1 or 20 as a critical failure or success is more problematic for the rolling success variant and is best avoided as it always raises the chance of each by 5%, regardless of the target roll.

Steps of +/- 5, with the addition of a natural 1 or 20 as a critical failure or success, is recommended as the main variant. Rolling success, without an additional role for a natural 1 or 20, is an alternative option.

RESEARCH NOTES

As our games of knucklebones have become more sophisticated, the multi-sided die has become the symbol for chance, opportunity, and even our Order. But even this symbol of chance is governed by the laws of probabilities...

...for a twenty-sided die roll, the chance of rolling over a target number, then rolling higher on a second roll, is $(20-t)(19-t)/800$, where t is the target number.

Insinoori Tonttu

IF NO ADDITIONAL EFFECT FROM NATURAL 20s

Target	1+	2+	3+	4+	5+	6+	7+	8+	9+	10+	11+	12+	13+	14+	15+	16+	17+	18+	19+	20
<i>Steps +/- 5</i>																				
Critical Hit %	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strong Hit %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Success Roll</i>																				
Critical Hit %	43	38	34	30	26	23	19.5	16.5	14	11	9	7	5	4	2.5	1.5	0.75	0.25	0	0
Strong Hit %	52	47	42.5	38	34	30	26	22.5	19	16	13.5	11	9	7	5	3.5	2	1	0.5	0

IF NATURAL 20s ARE ALSO ALWAYS A CRITICAL SUCCESS

Target	1+	2+	3+	4+	5+	6+	7+	8+	9+	10+	11+	12+	13+	14+	15+	16+	17+	18+	19+	20
<i>Steps of +/- 5</i>																				
Critical Hit %	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Strong Hit %	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Success Roll</i>																				
Critical Hit %	48	43	39	35	31	28	24.5	21.5	19	16	14	12	5	9	7.5	6.5	6	5	5	5
Strong Hit %	47	42.5	38	34	30	26	22.5	19	16	13.5	11	9	7	5	3.5	2	1	0.5	0	0

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